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## SPECIAL NUMBER ON THE SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOL



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*Editors:* ROBIN PEDLEY and BRIAN SIMON
Education Department, University of Leicester

*Assistant Editor:* GEOFFREY RICHARDSON

*Editorial Communications.* MSS and contributions to discussion (800 words maximum), which will be welcomed, and books for review should be addressed to the Editors, 71 Clarendon Park Road, Leicester.

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# The Future of the Secondary Modern School

EDWARD BLISHEN

*This editorial article has been written by Edward Blishen in collaboration with the three members of the Editorial Board of* FORUM *who teach in secondary modern schools—Marjorie Cooke, H. E. Hopper and J. Walton. It has their approval as a statement of policy.*

Anyone who has had to lecture, or to write, or even to talk privately or to himself, about the school to whose condition this issue of FORUM is devoted—*the* Secondary Modern school—will know that it is rather like having to pontificate about *the* Human Being. And it is so not only because of our typically English luxuriance of points of view and practices. The existence of schools called secondary modern (or, in some areas, carefully *not* called secondary modern) is an administrative convenience, a projection of our social and cultural prejudices, a lazy sequel to certain facts of our national history: but it is scarcely a construct following from any firm and defensible educational philosophy. Very simply, its existence rests on the assumption that at the age of eleven it is possible, or fruitful, or liberal, or even ordinarily humane, to divide children for educational purposes quite drastically, having no regard for differences in rate of growth or in background and history—no regard for the obvious educational principle that *discouragement* of children should be avoided like the plague at every point in their progress—and precious little regard, one would think, for that political outlook which we claim when we call ourselves a democracy.

### Assumptions and attitudes

This assumption, again, rests on another: that there are two sharply different species of education, which correspond to very clear differences of intellectual make-up between child and child. Woven into these assumptions are certain social attitudes of which many of us have become almost unaware: attitudes which lie behind our practices when it comes to deciding on such matters as the staffing and equipment of schools of one kind or another. Probably to no other field as sophisticated as this one of education do we bring a set of assumptions and attitudes so primitive—intellectually, indeed, so farcical.

It may seem odd to open a discussion of the secondary modern school by exploding a bomb under the very conception of such a school. But in fact it is a series of such bombs that are provided by the articles that follow. None of our contributors was briefed to be, in this way, explosive. A few of them may even be grieved to have this destructive meaning read into their work. But let us look at what they say.

### Examinations

Let us look even at an article like Miss Joan Davis's on examinations in the secondary modern school, in which her purpose is no more (and, of course, no less) than to point out to teachers an urgent choice that will determine their control of their own work. Miss Davis reminds us that teachers in secondary modern schools (because 'barely 18 per cent of them are graduates' and so their 'position as subject teachers is far from strong') tend to look to outside bodies to conduct examinations and to determine curricula for them. This brings to our notice at once a certain abjection that is written into the history of English teaching—an abjection which gives the teacher in the secondary modern school, *on the whole,* a sense of inferior professional quality: it eats away at him, continually, and it is an inevitable consequence of that fragmentation of English education which allots, for all the official protestations, for all the talk of 'parity of esteem', differing kinds of prestige to the two ends (the little, honoured end and the big end far less honoured) of our system. Of course, secondary modern teachers struggle against this, and the articles they contribute to this issue are a testimony to that struggle: but a broken system of education will always make that struggle necessary, and will always, over the whole scene, limit its fruitfulness. If you split child from child you split teacher from teacher, and that's the logic of it.

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DOUGLAS COULSON

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The bomb exploded in Mr. Farley's article on discipline is a louder one. No one who has taught in secondary modern schools almost anywhere will doubt that his theme is an important one. Difficulties of sheer control loom large in such schools in very many places. Mr. Farley lists some reasons for this. Overcrowding is one, with a high ratio of pupils to teacher: and these are, let us be frank about it, simple consequences of the scale of values by which we judge the needs of the various parts of our fragmented system. Another reason for difficulties of control, he says, is the impossibility, in many of these schools, of developing an adequate prefect system. Well, there are other views about this, one of them expressed trenchantly by Mr. Rowe in his article: but if one generalises this—if one makes it a question of the part played by children in school government—then one sees that in fact the readiness with which grammar school children take responsibility upon themselves is intimately related to the sense they have that the school is theirs—that they, the staff, the system, run sweetly together: whereas the unreadiness of most secondary modern children rests simply on the fact that few of them have such a feeling—society has placed them under an evasive ban, and the force of that ban is to prevent them from caring to take responsibility upon themselves. We note that among the other reasons Mr. Farley gives for difficulties in control is the lack of status of the teacher, which is something we have already touched upon in speaking of Miss Davis's article.

### Selection of heads

Mr. Farley's final reason, that selection of headmasters is not always as inspired as it might be, is a nettle we have to grasp—even if it leads to a drop in our readership among secondary modern heads. In fact, it is not the headmaster who reads FORUM who is likely to be of the kind Mr. Farley is striking at. The plain truth is, as all know who have moved in the secondary modern world, that heads are by no means always well-chosen. It is a fact of educational life that clumsy appointments in this field are far more common than in the world of the grammar school. This, again, is a simple consequence of our broken system, since appointments in the secondary modern world are made on far vaguer grounds, with far less caution, according to far naïver estimates of what is required, than at the other end of the scale.

Mr. Rowe, though he clearly might, face to face, have differences of opinion with Mr. Farley, in fact sums up the whole of Mr. Farley's argument when he says, simply, that the teaching that has to be done in the secondary modern school is teaching aimed at 'the removal of underprivilege'. He is speaking of underprivilege here in all its senses, social, emotional, cultural: but can we doubt that these senses are, in most cases, tightly woven together, and that our broken system of education is their very monument? Mr. Rowe, one would think, is absolutely right in summing up the task of the secondary modern school in this way: but one is left reflecting that the very existence of that school is a most powerful instance of underprivilege, and that in this sense it must always, in its battle with its enemies—in its attack on the many consequences of the 'admass, sugar-pig world'—find itself locked in mortal combat with itself.

### The existing secondary modern school

But the secondary modern school exists: and though we have this fundamental belief about it, that only through its supersession will a truly healthy—a politically, socially and culturally sane—national system of education arise, we nevertheless are obviously concerned that as much should be done for the secondary modern school *while it exists* as is possible. We believe that the very best thing we can do for it is to support the movements taking place which are bringing about more flexible, more open and unexclusive forms of organisation: but this still leaves a great deal to be said on behalf of the secondary modern school as it is. It leaves much, for example, to be said about staffing. Mr. Davison's article is only the one that most directly draws attention to the way in which quite inadequate staffing is making more difficult the work of these schools. He is wrong, one might think, in attacking those teachers who in one book or another have drawn attention to difficulties of control: for those difficulties exist, and they spring from social and educational inequalities that must be removed. But he is surely right in carrying his charge into the training colleges, for a discussion of the curious problems of control in the secondary modern school ought certainly to be a large feature of the work done there, and one suspects it is only too often quite unrealistically dealt with. But the number of teachers dissuaded from service in the secondary modern schools because they fear they will be unable to establish control is probably less important than the simple matter of the total number of teachers: there must be more, and there is an end to it. One of us remembers only too vividly the agitation expressed at a staff meeting at the prep school at which he taught before going into secondary moderns—an agitation caused by the headmaster's announcement that, next term, one of the classes would simply have to be 20 strong. There were pale faces, and then the senior master rose

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and said that he would take that class: whereupon pallor turned into applause. The situation is as simple as that. There is an end of our educational system (it happens to be the big end) where classes of 35 or 40 or even more are commonplace, and where no teacher has the time to turn pale. We cannot rest until this is altered.

### The task

Much, too, has to be said about the question to which Miss Davis's article is devoted—which is explicitly the question of examinations in the secondary modern school but which implicitly is a far larger question, the whole question of *what the secondary modern school is doing.* It should be said at once, and proudly, that many of the boldest experiments in what might be called pure education have come from the best of the secondary modern schools. Given a wholly new task—that of devising a system of secondary education for children known to our over-confident classification as 'average' and 'less-than-average'—they have looked afresh at the whole question of the what and the how and the why of teaching—and have come up with answers that, in many more cases than one, have been adopted on the other side of the educational fence. (The traffic in ideas of this sort between secondary modern and grammar schools has been a quiet persistent contradiction of all our divisions). The freedom of much of the work done in secondary modern schools from the pressure of external examinations has made possible most of these experiments, and Miss Davis's article reminds us that much that is lively and effective in secondary modern teaching can be preserved only if teachers insist on controlling, and controlling very closely, such new examinations as are introduced. Once again, however, this is a field that one can hardly survey rationally without concluding that the barriers stretched between the parts of our system are nonsensical barriers: for plainly the whole question of examinations is one that spreads, and calls for reappraisal, across the entire field of education. It may be true, as Miss Davis suggests, that the growing demand for examinations is a measure of the sense that secondary modern children and their parents now have that they have been excluded from the competitive arena of modern society: but this, after all, when one looks at it, is merely a way of saying that these children and their parents have a mounting sense of having been excluded. Full stop.

The fact is that this feeling of having been shut out, marked by this clamour for examinations, is another bomb laid under the tripartite system. It is clearly a mark of a caste system in decay that more and more extraordinary attempts to establish difference lead to more and more extraordinary attempts to prove equality.

### The environment

Much has to be said, again—and much is implied in these articles—about the environment provided for its children by the secondary modern school. Mr. Farley writes of the combined effects on those children of living in an affluent society, being taught by teachers whose post-Freudian awareness of human nature makes them less capable than earlier teachers of rigid formal discipline, and being less purely *young* than children of earlier generations. From this it is logical to turn to Mr. Walton's article on adventure schools, and particularly to his conclusion that 'the growing child is not necessarily best understood within the walls of a school'. The effect on Mr. Walton's boys and girls of the work they have done at Edale can hardly be calculated, but we see at once that it involves a degree of responsibility, of adventure, of escape from desk and dais, unimaginable in the earlier history of these schools and their predecessors. Much that is written, not only in this article but in the others, is an implicit argument in favour of something strongly advocated by many secondary modern teachers: an increase in maturity and informality in the school environment itself. The task, says Mr. Rowe, is to remove a sense of underprivilege, and we do this best by treating the children as persons soon to be adult, by involving them in enterprises that allow the force of a reasonable philosophy of human values to be *felt.* Too much in too many secondary modern schools smacks of a quite primitive idea of what schooling should be: from barracks-like buildings to buildings divided too coldly into fixed teaching areas: from childish desks and unsuitable seating to forms of organisation thoughtlessly borrowed from the past. One thing, certainly, that the best secondary modern schools will have done, and that will have been done by experiments like that at Edale, is to dissolve that barrier between *them* and *us* of which Mr. Rowe justly complains. It is not by declaring his sympathy for the sensitive process of adolescence that the teacher will destroy that barrier; it is by acting upon his sympathy, by devising ways of teaching (and general relationships) that allow that sympathy to be felt and to be seen in action. Here is a field in which some secondary modern schools have done superbly well, and this may be their finest contribution to that more flexible and unexclusive system of education to which we look forward.

No one can look at the secondary modern school without noting the obvious fact (but how casual we

are, as a nation, about this!) that the school necessarily contains a very large number of the most desperately backward. In his book *Educating One Nation,* John Sharp asks: 'Who are the neglected children in the nation's schools?' His answer is that they are those in the second quarter of the range of intelligence. One might as easily say that they are the generally backward, the 'lower-than-average'—the children who, to be certainly helped, need to be taught in small groups under teachers with special training. It is true that the most backward are in many places looked after with great devotion. But often even there the devotion struggles against pure arithmetic, the impossibility of doing what one should when classes, as small as they can be made, are still far too large. And one has to say that we are a long way from securing understanding devotion everywhere: that schools still exist where the backward are known as the 'dippies' and are given to any teacher, or teachers, capable of reading them a story. There is a growth of sentimental literature about the backward child, or the child of below-average accomplishment: and though it is better to be sentimental than to be indifferent, to be truly helpful is better than either: and the number of children who still leave our secondary modern schools with acute difficulties in basic communication that could be removed by skilled teaching in small groups—this number, especially when one thinks of it in terms of the concealed social embarrassment and misery it gives rise to, is far too large for comfort. One really wishes it were possible to put some of our more comfortable administrators and governors in charge of a 'lower-than-average' secondary modern class for a term. It might bring nearer the day when the ridiculous gulfs both in our educational system and the social system it reflects are closed. Those gulfs, we who teach in secondary modern schools are constantly reminded, are not interesting social oddities, which make absorbing reading when they are elegantly discussed in the Sunday newspapers, but are causes of grief, agony and despair to many thousands of children and to the men and women they become.

Of the quiet work that is being done in this field, often against dreadful odds, sometimes in a most unsympathetic environment, Mr. Wildblood's article is an important reminder.

We don't pretend to have given, in this editorial or in the articles that follow, anything like a full picture of what is going on in the secondary modern school. We have treated of the argument about examinations that is now reaching a peak : of the problems of discipline and the situation that gives rise to them : of new, and maturer, and more adventurous forms of educational experience that are

coming out of the secondary modern schools, and of which the use made of that 200-year-old barn at Edale is an example. We have hammered in an obvious way at the fact of understaffing, simply because it is an obvious fact, and is right at the centre of the secondary modern situation : and we in the secondary modern schools shall bore everyone with it until it becomes no longer necessary to do so. We have said little about the great quiet rise of fifth years, partly because this is a matter that is implicit in Miss Davis's article, partly because, in our view, this is but another reason for claiming that the secondary modern school is an unsatisfactory concept. If those responsible for creating it thought of it secretly as only the old elementary school writ large, it is now writing itself larger than they could have imagined. But still too many of its children leave at a moment when, for all their apparent maturity (largely a product of their having so many means now of sharing from the beginning in the cultural life of their elders), they are still horribly young in experience, need quite desperately the sort of guidance that a good teacher can give and that membership of a live and sensitive community can give even better.

**Unexclusive secondary education**

It seems that the Crowther Report has become merely an expensive academic essay: but one cannot help wondering whether, had its main recommendation been of vital importance to the grammar or public school, instead of being one of immense consequence to the secondary modern school, it would have been so lightly shelved. As it happens, the secondary modern school, by means indicated in some of our articles, and by many other means, is creating itself the conditions which tempt more and more children to stay on, to pass from childhood into the young manhood and womanhood of 15 plus within the controlled inquisitive environment of the school. But the secondary modern school is having to do far too much for itself, to attempt far too often to raise itself, in this matter or that, by its own shoelaces : and we conclude as we began, by stating our view that this is likely to continue until, by a wider and wider spread of more flexible experiments in unexclusive secondary education, it becomes impossible to regard any particular sphere of that education as one in which less may be done, less may be provided, classic reports may be ignored, cuts in building and equipment may be secured. We support wholeheartedly all that is being done by the secondary modern schools at their best; and we shall be the first to congratulate them as they disappear into subtler, more truly democratic, educationally sounder forms of organisation.

# Discipline and the Underprivileged

*One of the greatest problems of the secondary modern school is that of pupil-teacher relationships—of discipline in its widest sense. In these two articles, A. W. Rowe, head of The Margaret Tabor school, Essex, and Richard Farley, author of* Secondary Modern Discipline (1960), *point to those aspects of the problem they consider of most importance, and propose their remedies.*

## (1) A. W. ROWE

*After being a headmaster in Devon for some five years Mr. Rowe became a Training College lecturer and then returned to headmastering first in Buckinghamshire and now in Essex. He is the author of* The Education of the Average Child.

From L. *disceri*, 'to learn', comes *discipulus*, 'disciple', and its derivative, *disciplina*, 'education', 'discipline'.

Discipline is what the disciple (pupil) practises; it consists of a willingness to learn from the master and to obey him. Because the pupil at his best practises it willingly, its core is assent. Nevertheless, even for the finest of pupils, it can never be complete assent, complete self-discipline: there must always in certain circumstances be obedience to the master. And this obedience may have to be on occasion a forced obedience.

This fact should be faced squarely—schools (however good) in our society are ultimately founded on compulsion, carefully though this may be hidden. Secondary schools, after all, are communities of many adolescents and few adults; and in the non-selective secondary schools with which we are here concerned the adolescents will be less privileged than their fellows.

The cultural impoverishment of these adolescents in the admass, sugar-pig world which our unbridled, profit-seeking society has deliberately created for them reveals itself in an increasing lack of significant sensual, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience. This will be especially marked among the 29 per cent of lower working class origin—Bernstein's 'public language' speakers—who will be most stunted of all by a severe linguistic impoverishment, a culturally-induced backwardness.[1]

A by no means small percentage of the total underprivileged population of the non-selective schools will belong also to the great army of the unloved — the poorly clad, the underfed, the uncivilised, the chip-on-the-shoulder-bearers (almost congenital non-assenters, these), the seriously maladjusted, the criminal, and the psychopaths.

Add to these the small percentage of what we (with our modern conviction that to label is to explain—to understand, even) call E.S.N. and near, and the picture is fairly complete.

This brief diagnosis is necessary if we are to understand precisely why the underprivileged find it so difficult to practise discipline ('to learn and to obey'), and to grow towards a discipline of assent. Only through such understanding can the total remedial action necessary be taken.

### Underprivilege and compassion

Their teachers' disciplinary role is accordingly one of peculiar complexity and difficulty involving as it does a particular quality of teaching, teaching which is to be regarded in this context as therapeutic and part of the larger pattern of the personal relationship between teacher and pupil.

No teacher can fill this role successfully unless he has a full understanding of what underprivilege means, and a deep and abiding compassion for those suffering from it. Given this, his disciplinary role, however severe at times, will be a truly religious one, for *religion is the state of being ultimately concerned.*[2] His compassion will endue him with the 'capacity to endure repeated disappointments',[3] and the necessary mental and spiritual determination to keep on trying, to remain undefeated. From ultimate concern flows charity—and his charity will be the key without which the door between him and the child he would help towards a discipline of assent

[1] Bernstein B., 'Social Structure, Language and Learning'. *Educational Research III*, 3. June, 1961.

[2] Tillich Prof. Paul, *Theology of Culture*. 1959.

[3] Glover E., *The Roots of Crime*. 1960.

stands forever shut: 'all the time in the world for' underprivileged children is the indispensable qualification for spending any time whatever with them.

(Incidentally, it is in the religious context of ultimate concern, compassion, and charity (or lack of them !) that all answers to questions about caning and other forms of punishment in schools should be placed if they are to have any meaning.[4] Those for whom the question of caning assumes such disproportionate importance — dogmatic non-caners and rabid caners alike — must be told that their fixation has little to do with discipline : discipline is a by-product of the total relationship established between teacher and pupil.)

The teacher-pupil relationship is itself a part of the total disciplinary impact of the whole school—its ethos as expressed by how we organise and administer it, by what we teach and how we teach it, and by how we behave as human beings in it (our teaching, as I have suggested, is a part of our behaviour).

For instance, it's no use a headteacher preaching the Christian message of brotherly love from his assembly-pulpit if the whole organisation and administration of his school is teaching his pupils to grow apart : 'How can I hear what you're *saying* when what you *are* is drumming in my ears.'[5]

It is what we are that matters — actions speak louder than words. True, but we should realise how important a part of our actions are embodied in permanent and powerful form in our organisation and administration. How can we bring the underprivileged into our fold, how can we persuade them that the school community consists only of *us*, not of *them* and *us*, if this permanent part of our actions is loudly telling them the reverse ?

Streaming, prizes and prize days, prefects, the codification of rules which can result at best only in a dead Pharisaic obedience, houses, many forms of personal-competitive comparisons, e.g. mark-lists, the parochial loyalty to school—these are the loud voices forever drumming the wrong message into the underprivileged. They can all be done away with.[6]

**Methods and content**

So much for organisation and administration. The foundations of our behaviour as human beings I have already dealt with above. How we should teach the underprivileged I have written about at length elsewhere.[7] There remains the question of *what* we should teach them, perhaps the most important educational question now facing us.

Our diagnosis of the major deprivations from which the underprivileged suffer makes clear by implication what their most urgent needs are. This gives us our clue : all that we teach should help to satisfy these needs; it should be aimed at removing their underprivileged state. It must therefore above all else be cultural, i.e., directed towards their full hominisation,[8] towards bringing them up to the level of the privileged, towards imparting a scale of values, a way of thinking, feeling and acting—in brief, a way of life. Only a book could begin to do justice to this question.

[4] Consider the West Riding C.C. report, *Caning, Behaviour and Delinquency in Secondary Schools*. 1961.

[5] Morenc J. L., *Who Shall Survive?* 1953.

[6] For a lengthy account of such measures, see the 12 articles in the *Schoolmaster* (1961): 'Educating Ordinary Children'.

[7] *The Education of the Average Child*. 1959.

[8] de Chardin Pieme Teilhard, *The Phenomenon of Man*. 1959.

## (2) RICHARD FARLEY

*After graduating from Glasgow University, Mr. Farley taught for five years in primary schools and then in secondary modern schools for the same period. He is now head of the history department in a Middlesex grammar school.*

The difficulties involved in solving the problem of Secondary Modern Discipline are vast; the problem of so doing, in 1,000 words is almost impossible. Briefly, the answer, to me, lies in what has become something of a cliché—human love.

Discipline, in a democracy, is not a word that produces the best of images. Too often it is associated with the least publicised aspects of National service or resurrects vague memories of former schooldays—neither very pleasant. Thus the term 'control' not only puts the subject in a new context but possibly improves its public relations.

The problem of control is especially pertinent when viewing the secondary modern school. Admittedly, in many areas where social conditions are improving, the situation can hardly be called critical but on the other hand, there are most certainly areas where the general behaviour of a minority of

pupils is hardly a fitting tribute to the aspirations of the 1944 Act and the spirit of the Welfare State.

This subject is known by the 'undermen' of the teaching profession but in the higher realms of education it is rarely discussed. It is paradoxical to find that, in a decade with such an impressive output of cultural data and educational research, the behaviour of some young people appears to leave so much to be desired.

The secondary modern gathers under one roof the 11+ rejects. A minority of the pupils are of border-line grammar school calibre; many of them have 'failed' the 11+ because of personal limitations, environmental factors, parental neglect, ill-health and so on. Further, these pupils, the majority of our future citizens, are in a poor state to combat the anti-intellectual tendencies of the affluent society. Advertising, TV and the usual paraphernalia of mass opulence erode the implied standards of the modern school.

### A new concept

Again, the Welfare State, with its cushioned security, insulates the younger generation against the economic and personal tragedies of the previous generation. This involves a new concept of discipline, for fear of poverty can no longer act as an incentive for work—as indeed it shouldn't. Add to this a general spirit of humanitarianism (aversion to corporal punishment, tolerance, environmental studies, etc.) and the fact of earlier physical maturity, and the situation becomes most complex. The 'Ted', usually a Sec Mod 'Old-Boy', is not endemic to our society alone; witness the Russian 'Stilyagi', the German 'Half-Strong'. This leads one to conclude that there is a global pattern of an adolescent revolt against accepted values taking place in the more advanced economies.

Change the focus and now pin-point a specific secondary modern school in a not too salubrious locality. The above factors will manifest themselves in this school—particularly among 'The Boys'—but to the myopic mind they will appear as isolated items; insolence, laziness, ignorance and all the other schoolboy vices. As yet, we have no theory of adolescent control (maybe this is a blessing). Individuals have to grope towards a form of teacher pupil coexistence by empirical means; yet, along such lines, certain broad modes of action can be assessed.

Firstly, the accelerated social changes reflect themselves in the secondary modern staff. The older staff may be men of high intelligence who have been precluded from professional advancement by pre-war lack of opportunities. They may be out of

touch with their young pupils—more so than in previous times—and cling more to older fashions of discipline. The cane and repression will produce a seething resentment amongst the more violent type of older pupil. On the surface it may appear to work; but one questions the educational validity of such attitudes. On the other hand, the young graduate of a liberal turn of mind may find that with the best of intentions his lesson has degenerated into a shambles. Somewhere between these two extremes lies the answer.

### The Metternich age

The older secondary modern pupil is an adolescent, not a school-boy (or girl) as before the war. Social changes also have bred a different type of person than pre-1939; this is a social fact and must be reckoned with. Sheer repression will just not work; it is the same in industry, the same in former colonial territories. The Metternich Age in education is over. Yet it would be unwise to promote a state of educational anarchism in our schools; some constructive balance is required. The class teacher can do little with the external (or social) factors which influence his pupils, but in some cases he can control the internal factors. These internal factors unfortunately are often results of the present set-up in this country and it is a brave teacher who can really come to grips with them. Some such factors are:

1 Overcrowding.
2 High ratio of pupils per teacher.
3 Sensitive local authorities over parent-pupil 'rights'.
4 New schools without adequate playground shelters. (Hence 'wet-day jitters'.)
5 School dinners—hence more children in school—more supervision—further impact on teacher's nerves.
6 No adequate prefect system possible, as in the grammar school, to lighten the load.
7 Lack of facilities for working in small groups.
8 Teachers' lack of status.
9 Older buildings—crowded playgrounds—unsuited for progressive methods or activities.
10 Method of selecting competent headmasters.

Many of these problems could be solved; but a barrier to the solution of this problem—which is basically political—is that the ruling élite in this country are usually educated outside the State system and do not give State education a social priority.

I am aware that I am dealing somewhat superficially with the problem, as space forbids a full amplification of these factors. One thing is certain: the teacher is the key figure, and although he may be severely limited in his facilities and social aids, he alone, has, in the final analysis, to control the pupils. Thus we can only deal with positive views and not normative ideals. The teacher must come to terms with the complex age in which he lives; nebulous (but well-meaning) timetables and bored boys (however 'unloved') cause a great deal of nervous strain for the class teacher.

### Personalities not probabilities

For him, discipline is a human problem; it involves tolerance, understanding and a genuine interest in young people. Such concepts are not always present —or appreciated—by administrators and theorists. Education, and teaching especially, are Arts, not Sciences. They are concerned with people, not with normal probability curves. In spite of some bad school conditions a rich warm heart can do more for discipline than a thousand theses. The pupils in our secondary modern schools need this humanity; if they do not get it from school they will get it from nobody and will have to make do with pale replicas of people as portrayed on TV and in glossy advertisements. I do not know all the answers, but I am certain that a little more compassion—from all quarters—would bury this skeleton in the cupboard of British education. Summing up, the answers to secondary modern discipline appear to me to lie in these factors:

1 A society that believes in something other than material values and status.
2 A society that regards education as a social investment with a moral purpose.
3 A staff of appreciated teachers who are not weak but who have a genuine feeling for young people.
4 A system of well-equipped schools that foster some corporate life and fuse vocational training with 'live culture'.
5 Parents who realise that their rights also imply duties.
6 A more efficient manner of selecting headmasters.

These may appear very general, 'airy-fairy' ideas, but without them any particular control problem is limited. All else is a mere application of skin ointment to an infected body politic.

# The Secondary Modern School and its Staff

L. DAVISON

*Mr. Davison spent eight years in a private fee-paying boarding school whilst taking an external degree. After one year at the University taking the post-graduate diploma he spent fifteen years as a class teacher in a senior school, followed by fifteen years as a head teacher of secondary modern schools. He is at present head of Battle secondary school, Reading, and is a past President of the Reading Teachers' Association.*

I doubt whether there can be found any social institution of twentieth century England more complex or more likely to cause difficulties for those entrusted with its direction than the secondary modern school. Generally housed in overcrowded, cramped, or even squalid premises, we secondary modern teachers have had the task of educating boys and girls of an infinite variety of ability, interest and temperament. Indeed the educational attainment of a secondary modern school is probably more varied than any other single educational establishment that can be named. At the time of life's greatest physical, intellectual and emotional change the child who has just been publicly 'rejected' is compulsorily lodged with us for three or four years.

And have we not done quite a job? Have we not achieved the astounding result that increasing numbers are voluntarily seeking a fifth year? If only Sir David Eccles realised what people we teachers are! We have John who developed late and can now, if home circumstances permit, take his G.C.E. in five, or even seven, subjects. Then we have Mary whose home was broken before she could toddle and who has been hopelessly spoiled by her grandmother ever since; and Arthur whose father is in and out of gaol, and who cannot read, and tries to keep both facts secret. Then there is Henry from an orphanage who regards nearly everyone as his enemy, but is a demon bowler and loves to rattle the Headmaster's stumps; and of course Susan, the Head Girl, from a lively and contented home which she has also helped to run.

### The new year

Perhaps our stickiest problem is the start of the school year. For our ablest and most stable children are discomfited after a supreme eleven year old effort, fully backed by their parents, to avoid coming to us. Imagine yourself, gentle reader, in the headmaster's room with the school year opening and Mother bringing in Anne with the heartening announcement that "Of course we are all terribly sorry that she has to come to this school"; or reflect on Mrs. Smith who, when asked by another parent to join the Parents' Association, replied "Since she failed her eleven plus we do not bother about her education."

In spite of all our problems the bulk of our secondary moderns have not been blackboard jungles. Unfortunately some secondary modern teachers manqués have made a little money out of their failure by writing books that have prejudiced the public against the secondary modern school—with the result that a student came into my secondary modern school the other day and freely admitted that 'he expected hostility'. It is not in blackboard jungles that G.C.E. results can be produced that startle the pundits who thought they had put our children neatly into the 'less than average ability' category. Fourteen year olds have learned to read, traditional English games have flourished, and many an employer has told us that our children settle in more sociably and naturally than other favoured ones.

### Some reforms

But for us teachers it has been a tough life, of considerable spiritual wear and tear, and for all the talk of long holidays and short hours, the current shortage of teachers is most keenly and tragically felt in the secondary moderns. Apart from such obvious reforms as a better basic salary, introducing comprehensive schools, or giving us a decent allowance of space and equipment, what help can be given us? Especially what kind of people do we need and how should they be trained? These are difficult questions to answer, but I will do my best and may succeed in provoking some useful discussion.

For such a varied gathering of youngsters and for classes of such size and range of ability as ours we need first of all people with genuine human

sympathy who are fond of children and who have had a liberal education. To some readers these may seem vague phrases. I am afraid I cannot be more precise in one article, though what follows may define my meaning to some extent.

A brief college training straight after school is not a suitable way into our profession, though I prefer that to the current tendency to accept teachers just because they have a degree. I would like all teachers to have a university course after a period in industry or other normal adult employment; then training for a long as possible, and later a year travelling abroad and visiting other educational institutions. As for the nature of this training I can only look back over my teaching life and say that I have found most valuable the lectures given by the Professor of Philosophy, and those on the History of Educational Ideas, or those on Experimental Psychology. These taken together with the University Library proved rich in inspiration; but the greatest blessing of all was the teaching practice, even though it was too short (in the sense that it did not bear any resemblance to the 'day in, day out' teaching of the newly qualified teacher). It was not only too short: it was not discussed enough and the main problem that the inexperienced teacher will have to face was seldom if ever discussed. I refer to the problem of controlling children en masse without becoming a martinet. Discussions that I have had since with students visiting my school have tended to confirm that this is still a weakness of student training.

### Large classes and small rooms

The problem of controlling large numbers of adolescents in a small space and with inadequate equipment is one that never leaves the consciousness of even the most experienced teachers, though many would not admit it. It simply terrifies many a young teacher because he or she has experienced nothing like it in normal life. They have only some scanty memories of how they once played up 'Miss Ineffectual', or liked 'old so and so'. In this very unnatural teachers' world of mass produced education it is easy to lose either one's humanity or one's living, and often it is the most sensitive and promising personalities who are baffled and beaten. This subject ought to be more frankly discussed and I was glad to see a beginning in the last issue of FORUM.

If we had more leisure in the schools a good way of dealing with the matter would be for tutors, students and teachers to meet after the period of

practice and discuss the course of the lesson, or better still, the week's lessons, and the mistakes that had been made. In a brief article like this it is impossible to deal adequately with what would emerge at such a meeting, but at the risk of misunderstanding and in order to avoid the charge of not attempting what I accuse others of neglecting I will offer some advice from an 'old hand' with the hope that this will, as I say, cause some worthwhile discussion.

Through thick and thin, in stormy anger or calm content, the teacher must care for the children, both individually and collectively. He must know them by name, and know their background, their accomplishments and their problems. He must always be as fresh as paint (what a hope !) and talk very little. His talk must be in simple, warm and homely language, which also is by no means an easy task. How many students and young teachers lecture our children in quite impossible language and for quite impossible lengths of time, and then complain that the children are rude ! The teacher is principally an organiser of well planned work, and with our ranges of ability this is another mighty difficult task. To achieve discipline is a many sided accomplishment, and to 'make your lessons interesting' is not enough.



Most futile of all is the declaration that one must be a 'born teacher'. Occasionally I have used corporal punishment, especially in times of educational decadence, such as the economic crisis of the 'thirties, or the second world war. As school conditions improve the frequency of this kind of punishment, indeed of all punishment, declines to vanishing point. The present shortage of teachers is likely, alas, to put it on an upward curve again. I have found that corporal punishment is nearly always accepted as just, and children have a strong sense of justice. Some quick and vigorous action has always seemed to me infinitely preferable to sarcasm or 'picking on me', or continual denigration. I remember one teacher whose favourite quotation seemed to be "You cannot make silk purses out of sows' ears". When she was teaching she looked as if she was thinking of her classes as of pigs, and so they were with her. The old adage of getting what you expect from children is true enough, and one of our joys is sometimes getting much more than we even dared to hope for.

### The head's responsibility

The head and staff as a whole can make all the difference to the start of the young teacher, as a correspondent, M. J. Baker, so rightly suggests (FORUM, Vol. 4, No. 1). The best head I remember for getting his staff to work together as a whole was a liberal minded man who allowed a vast variety of classroom teaching methods, so long as they worked; and encouraged, or even provoked, vigorous controversy among his colleagues. Such a well-knit staff can make a tremendous difference to the early experiences of a newly qualified teacher.

Perhaps one of our biggest needs is a long break after some ten or twelve years of teaching. Promotion provides a change, but this does not come to all good teachers. We should be encouraged and not discouraged from participating in active adult public life. A year off from teaching with full pay, and the opportunity to go abroad and visit other educational institutions, is a quite essential reform. The writer has had 31 years in senior and secondary modern schools without a break, so he writes of this reform very feelingly.

What a tremendous subject is this concerning the kind of people we need in our secondary modern schools. It is too big for one article. It requires a series of articles, and we secondary modern teachers are so busy, for as well as our normal work we now have on our hands this grave shortage of teachers, to say nothing of a battle with Minister Eccles for the basic decencies of professional life.

# Discussion

## *A Plan for Staffing*

Uncertainty of staff is just as big a headache to the schools as downright shortage but, perhaps, more easily remedied. We are all familiar with the wonderful timetable that owing to resignations becomes a patchwork of 'temporary' changes after Christmas, 'temporary' changes that will endure for at least a term: we are all familiar with the club or school society that springs to life in the dark October evenings to perish in infancy when its founder leaves at Christmas. In fact, it would be safe to say that the average head would rather timetable for a depleted staff in September, secure in the knowledge that the timetable would run for a year, than endure the uncertainty that now prevails.

This is an attempt to formulate a plan for summer resignations only.

Every teacher would report for duty in September to an appointment and timetable that would, barring accident or illness, continue unchanged until July. If, by the first week of the Spring term he had decided that he would not wish it to continue beyond July he would ask for himself and his post to be put into a Pool. The first week of the Spring term is chosen to prevent hasty end of term decisions born of winter tiredness and vexation.

In the last week of January all the pending September vacancies would be advertised for competition only among those in the Pool. The submission of applications, shortlisting, interviewing and appointment could be completed by the end of February.

At the beginning of March the posts for which no applications had been received would be readvertised for those whose first choice had been unsuccessful. If necessary, the process could be gone through again before the end of May when it would be reasonable to assume that from a pool in which there would be more vacancies than teachers everyone would have obtained an agreeable prospective appointment. The residue would then be open to college leavers.

On the first of August the Pool would be closed. In the unlikely event of any not having obtained agreeable appointments they would, by mutual agreement, be available as supply teachers to their then or other authorities. Those whose posts had carried allowances would keep them subject to their agreeing to be repooled in the following January. In any case, heads would know before September what staff they were having and they and their staffs could plan for a year unthreatened by the Damocletian sword of Christmas and Easter resignations.

There would probably need to be safeguards. Authorities would have to take their pick from the first batch of applicants rather than, as is now too common, turn all down in the hope of finding an archangel. Holders of large allowances for great responsibility would have to choose from among the advertised vacancies, not lie in the Pool awaiting a sabbatical year's supply class teaching with their allowances intact.

Snags there would certainly be to be ironed out with experience but, given fair dealings on both sides, the scheme seems workable.

D. KELLY,
*Headmaster, Brimington C.S.B. School, Chesterfield.*

## *Discipline in Schools*

M. J. Baker writes in the Autumn FORUM: "In many schools at present there is very little general school discipline strongly maintained by the head and senior members of staff."

I believe this to be true and so must many parents who make great sacrifices to send their children to private schools where in many cases the facilities are vastly inferior to those enjoyed at the modern state school and where the standard of teaching is not necessarily higher but the standard of discipline is.

In a state school, a teacher's authority depends on his personality but is largely based on bluff—a bluff all too frequently called by the 'wide' boy.

If this youngster gets away with his indiscipline not only may he be launched on a career at the tax- and ratepayers' expense—approved and remand homes, borstal, prison—but what is worse, he becomes somewhat of a hero and his example infectious.

The head has powers of corporal punishment and while these need not be invoked very frequently in order to discipline a rebel minority—too often the 'modern educationalist' scorns such 'barbarous methods', preferring psychiatric mumbo-jumbo of his own devising.

The more 'primrose' elements of the press that give great prominence to the aggrieved mis-statements of misguided parents and little to the facts are among the primary causes of stunted discipline in our schools, as are those educational authorities who for various and dubious reasons fail to back up the head's authority and actions.

Finally, on the educational side, when we depart from insisting on the three R's and when the education authorities state in their instructions "Homework is optional" we encourage the teacher with a 9 to 4 mentality and the pupil, who never has to buckle down to unsupervised work at home, and whose character remains unimproved thereby.

Our new schools are magnificent, but do we produce as good an answer as the Victorian dominie?

V. MALLESON, *Lieut-Cmdr. R.N. (rtd.).*

## *Freedom in Junior Schools*

Mr. Price's account of his Exercise in Freedom in a Junior School (FORUM, Vol. 4, No. 1) is written in the style of a success story, and there is much in it to justify this. But I am left wondering if there may not be a debit side to the undertaking, and think that this should be considered. Doubts may arise if we reflect upon the question 'Why are children sent to school?' We hear much these days of education in a wide sense, of inculcating a sense of values, a spirit of social

responsibility, and feelings of consideration for others. But in this training, schools play only a small part. Many other factors and influences have dominant roles—the home, the environment of the neighbourhood, television, the cinema, the press, social clubs and organisations, etc. If schools should fail in this part of their work, then the education of the child in these matters would not cease, and might not suffer. Were this all that is required in the upbringing of children, it is doubtful whether we should ever have gone to the expense of providing schools and teaching staffs.

But as well as these aspects of education, children need other training. They need to be able to read, write, calculate, and have some knowledge of the history, art, and literature of the communities in which they have to take a place. It is particularly the task of the schools to provide this education, and if it is not done at school, it may not be provided at all. So we have to ask what progress in the exclusive school part of education was made by the pupils in Mr. Price's experimental year.

We are told that the main scheme was to allow the children to choose their activities themselves and the time which they devoted to them, and then to 'work in', whenever possible, studies in the more usual school subjects. What is pertinent to enquire is to what extent it was possible to do this 'working in', and what advances in these subjects were made. Mr. Price speaks of an imbalance between written and practical work, and also of easing his conscience which nagged him about this. It would appear that he did not feel that he was making sufficient headway with subjects usually taught in schools.

So we may wonder what happened to these children when, after their 'full and fruitful year', they moved on to the secondary school. We are told that one boy did well, coming second in an A stream class. But what of the others? Were they able to do the amount of reading, writing, and calculating that a secondary school teacher needs to be able to take for granted if he is to proceed with his part of education, or were they found to be deficient in these abilities? If they were, what was the teacher to do? Was he to begin to try to make these children work at subjects in which they had very little direct interest? Or was he to re-introduce the puppet shows, models, shops, the mice, frogs, lizards, etc., and suffer from a nagging conscience for four years? And even if he did what then would happen when these children eventually left school and entered into adult employment? It is very unlikely that they would all find jobs in activities in which they were interested. How many employers, even the benevolent welfare state, would be prepared to let these young people pursue their natural interests, and then 'work in', whenever possible, some amount of the tasks which their business required to be performed?

It may be said in defence of the methods employed by Mr. Price that even if his experiment did not advance the children far in mastery of the more usual school subjects, yet very little more, even if as much, would have been achieved by pursuing orthodox methods, and that these would have been accompanied by 'apathy and demoralisation', and 'bitterness and resentment'. But is it necessarily the case that these undesirable states arise simply because children may be obliged to attend to subjects in which they are not naturally or immediately interested? Is it not possible that with skilful teaching an interest can be stimulated where none at first exists? Cannot these subjects be made attractive as work in them progresses even if at first children are not drawn towards them? And would it not be better to make greater efforts in this direction, rather than allow children to pursue simply their natural interests and 'work in' some amount of training in usual school subjects if and when opportunity arises? For it seems to me to be very likely that if this second course is followed, then schools may fail to fulfil their exclusive part in a child's upbringing, and also miss an opportunity to train their pupils in an important aspect of wider education.

If children are to become future good citizens then at some time they have to learn that often they have to do things in which they may have no immediate or direct interest, and things which they may not want to do or like doing. Anyone who is to become a satisfactory member of a community has to learn this lesson, and those who do not learn are likely to become the misfits and discontents of society. And if the lesson has to be mastered, will it not more easily be done in the Infant and Junior stages than if it is left until later?

It is considerations of this nature which lead me to wonder if Mr. Price's efforts were made in the best direction, and whether the success which he obtained is that which most needs to be achieved.

M. J. BAKER,
*Torells County Secondary School, Essex.*

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## EXAMINATIONS IN SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOLS—AND WHO IS TO CONTROL THEM

(*continued from page* 64)

A letter from William Taylor in the *Guardian* in September 1961 forces those who feel all external examinations to be undesirable (and I have been one of them) to face the fact that many of our educational problems derive from the status distinctions of our social structure. To him it is clear that teachers, parents and pupils are concentrating upon ends that are in accord with the values systems of contemporary society. Secondary modern schools were excluded from the competitive - success system which they are now breaking into. Only when we are prepared for a radical change in our social values will it be possible to deflect the present trend towards more and more examinations for more and more pupils. Until then our only safeguard as teachers is to insist upon our own control of examinations—in order to retain control of the curricula in our schools.

# Examinations in Secondary Modern Schools—and who is to Control them

JOAN A. M. DAVIS

*Miss Joan Davis taught in a co-educational country grammar school for 16 years. Her interest roused in the new secondary schools by Sir Fred Clarke, she became headmistress of a girls' secondary modern school in Lincoln. Since 1948 she has been at the University of London Institute of Education as Senior Lecturer in Education with special reference to the secondary modern curriculum.*

'The existence of separate examining bodies gives opportunities for experiment which should not be neglected.'

'I want to see the subject teachers within a region brought together in the same room to discuss their work in relation to their joint syllabuses and examinations.'

'We have seen that any steps towards a greater measure of school control of the examinations will facilitate regional organisation, just as regional organisation will facilitate school control.'

'There is no substitute for slow and painstaking collaboration and planning of curricula and examinations through democratic machinery.'

Can these be quotations from the Crowther Report? Or part of a minority report of the Beloe committee? Or a statement from members of the Secondary School Examinations Council dissenting from the Beloe proposals for a centralised national examination for non-selective schools? Can the Secretary of the College of Preceptors have written thus to the Minister? Or is it a Secretary for Education defending his local examinations so cursorily dealt with in the Beloe report?

None of these, but J. L. Brereton when nearly twenty years ago he wrote *The Case for Examinations, an account of their place in education with some proposals for their reform* (1944). He was writing about the School Certificate examination in particular, but his main concern was to show that those who controlled examinations also determined curricula to a far greater extent than administrators would admit. If teachers are to decide upon curricula—as they must and should—then they must also control external examinations.

A main objective in 1912 when the School Certificate was instituted was to reduce the number of examinations which confronted pupils in grammar schools at that time. However critically the School Certificate came to be regarded later, no one could deny that, as the Spens Report put it, it had preserved secondary schools from 'the nightmare of a multiplicity of external examinations'.

### Who decides the curriculum ?

As grammar schools before 1912, so secondary modern schools in the early sixties, but it must be acknowledged that the schools seem to look upon the multiplicity of examinations not as a nightmare but as a means of salvation. Someone must determine the curriculum; if the Minister will not and the teacher cannot, then the examiner must.

Of examinations for the fifteen year old at the end of a four year course there are at least two, the College of Preceptors' School Certificate introduced in 1953 and the School Certificate of the Northern Counties Examination Council, now in its third year. For the sixteen year old at the end of a five year course there is the Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education of nine recognised Examining Boards. 'Recognised' means that they are approved by the Minister and that pupils' fees are covered by grants. This is a subject examination and candidates may offer one subject, or any number of subjects according to individual preference. Two other examining bodies, the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes and the East Midland Educational Union, the first since 1956 and the second since 1960, also provide School Certificate examinations which are subject examinations coming at the end of a five year course.

On the other hand, two examining bodies organise group examinations in which a candidate has to take four or more subjects. In 1954 the Royal Society of Arts instituted its School Certificate for the sixteen year old and the Union of Educational Institutions, based in Birmingham, more recently started a School Certificate aimed at sixteen year olds below the top 25 per cent of the age group and above the bottom 50 per cent in ability.

Since 1890 the London Chamber of Commerce has held subject examinations at an elementary and at an intermediate level, and at the higher level there is a group examination leading to the School Certificate of Commercial Education. Before long

the City and Guilds of London Institute may also offer examinations for secondary school pupils. Some of these examinations were originally intended for students in further education but secondary school pupils are not debarred from them.

### Special subjects

There are, in addition, examinations in special subjects, housecraft, needlework, mothercraft, pre-nursing, commercial subjects, music, art, religious knowledge, swimming, life saving and first aid, all organised by external examining bodies. In some areas entrance examinations for apprenticeships to the armed forces are taken by numbers of boys; in other areas the local technical college sets its own entrance examination for would-be entrants from secondary modern schools.

Clearly the phrase 'the nightmare of a multiplicity of external examinations' is quite as relevant today as when it referred to the position in grammar schools before 1912.

But does an increasing number of examinations mean that large numbers of candidates are being entered for them? How far has it become common practice in secondary modern schools to make use of one, or several external examinations? These are the questions which the Beloe committee tried to answer; the Crowther report touched on them when discussing extended courses and the proposed change in the school leaving age. Of recent years the annual report from the Ministry has given special attention to pupils from secondary modern schools entering for the G.C.E. examination. A number of the regional examining bodies supplied the Beloe committee with numbers of candidates for their examinations from 1957 to 1960. The committee also made use of returns from a questionnaire sent to 272 secondary schools of all types, a stratified random sample of maintained secondary schools in England and Wales from which they were able to discover what external examinations had been taken by pupils in 150 secondary modern schools in 1957 and 1958. From this sample the committee made some prediction of trends in secondary modern schools as a whole.

The Ministry's last annual report, *Education in 1960,* shows over one and a half million pupils in secondary modern schools, 1,637,879 in actual figures. There were 3,837 schools classified as secondary modern schools as distinct from bilateral, comprehensive and a category called 'Other secondary schools'. The following table shows the number of pupils in secondary modern schools who voluntarily stayed at school after their fifteenth birthday.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aged | 15 | 55,117 |
| | 16 | 8,782 |
| | 17 | 751 |
| | 18 | 64 |
| | 19 | 2 |
| | Total | 64,716 aged 15-19 |

It is true that most who stay on at school do so in order to take external examinations and that a greater number each year choose to remain at school, some to take an examination at the end of their fourth year and some for a further year again, but this total should be set against the very much greater number, 296,076, who left school at fifteen. The Beloe committee estimated that there was an overall increase of 70 per cent in pupils taking external examinations between 1958 and 1959, and that this increase was out of all proportion greater than the actual increase in the number of pupils in secondary modern schools. It has to be remembered, however, that though the number of secondary modern schools from which pupils are entered for external examinations has risen rapidly and has been estimated to be two schools out of every three, yet the number of candidates from each school, though rising, is still small in comparison with the whole age group.

As far as the results of the sample can be relied upon, it would seem that 8·3 per cent of those pupils in secondary modern schools who were born in 1942 entered for external examinations at the end of their secondary course and that this percentage rose to 9·5 per cent in 1958 and was likely to be over 15 per cent in 1961.

### Only one in three

In the sample approached by the Beloe committee, only one school in three took no part in external examinations and one school in seven was already entering pupils for the G.C.E. and other external examinations. One school in six entered pupils for examinations intended for students in further education. Half the sample entered candidates for external examinations other than G.C.E. and a further third planned to do so in the near future.

In the years 1957 to 1960 the number of pupils in secondary modern schools who entered for the G.C.E. was nearly doubled. Between 1956 and 1960 the number of secondary modern schools entering candidates doubled and by 1960 one secondary modern school in three was sending in pupils. On the other hand, in 1960 there were five times as many candidates for the College of Preceptors School Certificate as in 1956. In the last year the number was doubled and in 1961 17,000 candidates

took the examination. Some of these were of course in independent schools but 416 secondary modern schools entered pupils. The number of northern schools taking part in the Northern Counties Technical Examination nearly doubled from 1959 to 1961.

It is clear that there is a phenomenal rise in the number of pupils taking an examination at the end of the fourth year and a great annual increase in entries for the G.C.E. Most examining bodies report that between 1959 and 1961 the number of candidates has doubled.

Support for examinations at 15+ comes from teachers and parents; the Ministry and the Secondary School Examinations Council agree in considering them inadvisable. Since the Minister continues to refuse to recognise any examinations except the G.C.E. for purposes of grant, fees for admission to such an examination as the College of Preceptors School Certificate are paid by parents and the parents of this year's 17,000 candidates paid upwards of two guineas each.

The 416 secondary modern schools which entered pupils for this examination were widely scattered except in northern counties where the School Certificate of the N.C.T.E.C. is taken instead. County areas or boroughs where heads of secondary modern schools are left free to decide their own policy show a greater concentration of examination centres than in authorities where heads have to follow policy laid down by an Education Committee unfavourable to the examination. Kent shows one of the thickest scatter of centres; Cornwall, Devon, East Anglia, Wiltshire have very few. In Blackpool, Leicester and Peterborough a number of secondary modern schools take the College of Preceptors School Certificate. It may be that in rural areas parents are less conscious of the value of external examinations and perhaps less able or less ready to pay the fees.

The rapid increase in the number of schools involved in external examinations springs from the eagerness with which many teachers have seized upon examinations as an incentive to harder work and a longer school life. The majority of heads who

Candidates from secondary modern schools entering for external examinations

| Examinations | 1st Year of exam. | Type | Age | Number of Candidates 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G.C.E. O Level .. .. | 1951 | Subject | 16+ | 7334 | 8571 | 10986 | 16444 | 19407 | 21680 | Not available |
| A Level .. .. | | | | | | 280 | 343 | 385 | 597 | Do. |
| College of Preceptors School Certificate .. .. | 1953 | Group | 15+ | 1540 | 1935 | 3046 | 5305 | 8202 | 11148 | 17000 |
| Royal Society of Arts School Certificate .. .. | 1954 | Group | 16+ | | | | 3904 | 6833 | 9086 | Not available |
| Lancashire and Cheshire U. of E. I. School Certificate .. | 1956 | Subject | 16+ | | | | 1930 | 3467 | 4849 | 6106 |
| Union of Educational Institutions School Certificate[1] .. | 1958 | Group | 16+ | | | | 730 | 1618 | 3418 | 4576 |
| Northern Counties School Certificate .. .. .. | 1959 | Group | 15+ | | | | | 2506 | 4238 | 5983 |
| East Midland E.C. School Certificate .. .. .. | 1960 | Subject | 16+ | | | | | | 385 | 769 |

The totals, except the G.C.E. totals, are the total number of candidates entering for each examination; examining bodies do not distinguish candidates by their school but secondary modern schools supply most of the candidates. Though the Ministry's Reports account for secondary modern candidates separately, there may be some discrepancies because sometimes pupils from all-age schools are included in secondary modern totals.

[1] It is difficult to categorise candidates neatly into a tripartite division, particularly in the North West where some of the larger L.E.A.s have a policy of bilateralism. In this case so-called secondary modern schools have pupils in 'technical' streams. It is difficult for examining bodies to sort out candidates from secondary modern schools and these totals should be interpreted with considerable caution.

replied to the Beloe Committee's questionnaire believed that external examinations were an encouragement to a pupil to stay at school longer. No heads thought that examinations had an adverse effect on pupils' decision to say at school. The 1,500 teachers who attended the first conference of the N.C.T.E.C. in Newcastle in 1960 were strongly in favour of examinations. A majority voted against a proposal to lower the pass level of the Council's School Certificate and rejected proposals to substitute a subject for a group examination.

Of the 150 secondary modern schools in the Beloe sample about a quarter were entering pupils for examinations in special subjects such as commerce, music, art and housecraft.

### Local examinations

It has been estimated that in at least fifty areas groups of secondary modern schools are arranging their own local examinations along the lines of schemes at Scunthorpe and Reading which were described by Professor Boris Ford in his two articles in the *Guardian* during August. It is this type of examination which the Minister seems to approve most strongly on the ground that local examinations are very largely under the teachers' control; local variations in syllabuses and individual experiments in curricula are more possible.

But whatever the type of external examination all administrative work in connection with it is being voluntarily carried out by teachers.

There is evidence too of the increasing support from the pupils themselves for courses leading to examinations. The second volume of the Crowther report refers to a middle-sized county borough in the north where one-fifth of the age group were in grammar schools and 25 per cent of the age group leaving at 15+ apply for admission to the technical college; 45 per cent of boys and girls aged 15+ are choosing full-time education. In one of London's comprehensive schools, two-thirds of the girls, drawn from the whole ability range, elect to take a full two-year course from 14 to 16.

It is now coming to be generally accepted that in many, though perhaps not all, secondary modern schools there is a group with the ability to take four or more subjects at Ordinary level in the G.C.E. In 1960 candidates from secondary modern schools gained an overall pass rate of 48·8 per cent and the percentage for all candidates was only four points higher. In such subjects as art, music, handicraft, domestic science and building and engineering science over 60 per cent of the secondary modern candidates passed, compared with something like 58 per cent for candidates as a whole.

From the evidence presented to the Crowther Committee it seems that there may well be 165,000 pupils in secondary modern schools wishing to take a somewhat lower level of examination than 'O' level. They would represent the top third of secondary modern pupils and an examination for the upper half of an age group might involve examining nearly a quarter of a million pupils though it is not likely that the full total would be reached for some time to come.

### The big battalions

It was the potential size of this army of candidates for external examination, together with the fact that parents by freely paying the fees and teachers by freely undertaking the administrative work were acting directly contrarily to the Minister's regulations and expressed policy, which led to the Beloe recommendation of a national examination. Whatever members of the Beloe Committee privately and personally felt about the desirability of external examinations in secondary modern schools it would have been almost impossible for them to advise a laisser faire policy. The number of examinations, the number of examination centres and the number of examinees were rising so rapidly that Crowther's advice to wait and see what happened for the next five years seemed too risky to follow.

In 1911, 1926, 1943, 1959, 1960 and 1961 consultative and advisory committees have voiced doubts as to the wisdom of introducing external examinations into secondary schools. The dangers of rigidity, uniformity and narrowness have been stressed repeatedly, yet each committee even with a fairly strong dissenting minority has ultimately approved some form of external examination for secondary school pupils. Recently the pressure in favour of examinations has come from teachers, parents and pupils in secondary modern schools and by resorting to privately organised examinations they seem to have convinced the Minister that it is necessary to follow the advice given by the Secondary School Examinations Council.

What are the safeguards, if any? They are listed clearly in Brereton's proposals in 1944 for the reform of the School Certificate examination and four of them provide the introduction to this survey. First of all, Brereton advises us to accept the fact that curricula and examinations are and must be essentially related. More important is the absolute necessity for the same people to control both curricula and examination, and these must be the teachers — not the teachers' coopted or appointed representatives, but the teachers themselves in the schools. In a society where the Ministry of Education refrains from imposing curricula, where local authorities delegate responsibility for curricula to

governing bodies and heads of schools, a lacuna is created in which the responsibility for the planning of curricula rests upon no one but the teachers themselves. In grammar schools where nearly 80 per cent of teachers are graduates they have the support of their University courses and the association of subject teachers to which they belong. Even so these associations, notably the Science Masters' Association, the London Association for the Teaching of English and the Geographical Association have had to struggle hard for improvements in external examinations and for more control of the curriculum. It is perhaps inevitable that teachers in secondary modern schools, of whom barely 18 per cent are graduates and whose position as subject specialists is far from strong, should be turning to outside bodies to conduct examinations and to determine curricula for them. For this reason it is quite essential that all should realise that the ultimate control of curricula lies with those who control examinations, and that there is at this moment a chance that the new Certificate of Secondary Education can be very largely in the hands of secondary modern teachers themselves—and may irretrievably slip away.

Brereton hoped to see the examinations growing from regular meetings of all the subject teachers in a region; at these meetings common problems could be discussed and common examinations arranged. Syllabuses could be drawn up for each region by the teachers in it; they could carry out the marking, exchanging scripts; question papers should be drafted by teachers in another region. He hoped that all the schools within a region (and he wrote in terms of public schools and grammar schools) would form a single educational unit. The examinations would be internal for the unit, but external for each school in the unit. He illustrated the relationship he hoped to see developing between schools, university and examining body by two very clear diagrams which are well worth studying. He felt that there was no need for a national system and no need to attempt to get complete uniformity among the regions; the very existence of separate regional examining bodies would be an incentive to experiment. His main stress, however, was on the relatedness of school control and regional organisation. As Mannheim taught us, there can be planning for diversity as well as for uniformity and it is also possible to include in a plan an area to be left free from any planning. To work this out in terms of curricula and external examinations should be one of the responsibilities of local panels of teachers.

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# A Scheme for the Backward Reader

PETER WILDBLOOD

*Mr. Wildblood, who writes here on the scheme of remedial teaching he has developed in Birmingham, has held the posts of head of the remedial department at Foxford comprehensive school, Coventry, head teacher of a residential school for maladjusted children, and senior remedial teacher, Coventry. He is at present a senior remedial teacher working in Birmingham primary and secondary schools.*

It is impossible within the compass of a short article to cover all aspects of remedial education as applied to secondary school children with learning difficulties. As this is intended to be, essentially, a practical approach I shall restrict remarks to the reading situation and assume that you will be placing the plan I wish to discuss within the framework of a broad, stimulating educational programme through which the physical, social and emotional factors affecting learning will be catered for. The scheme is designed to operate where classes are large; it can also form the basis of purposeful individual work where pupils are in mixed ability groups.

Workbooks, though expensive, are used extensively in the scheme because preparatory work is kept to a minimum and marking can be done with the pupil. Thus 'face - to - face' contact between teacher and pupil is maximal, an essential factor in remedial work, and accelerated results well justify the expense involved.

Finally, before embarking on description of the scheme of work, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with standardised tests of attainment and non-verbal intelligence. No magical properties are attached to the information provided by intelligence tests. They merely give an indication of a testee's performance in a standard problem solving situation requiring little previously acquired knowledge. This may then be compared with all other available objective and subjective information in arriving at a tentative assessment of a pupil's ability to benefit from the learning situation. It should be noted that it is not uncommon to find pupils reading well beyond their 'test mental age' levels. This may be taken as a challenge, but equally the child with a 'slow' approach to learning needs to be recognised and provided with a great deal of encouragement.

### Diagnosing the Problem

The pupils for whom this scheme becomes operative are those whose reading ages fall seriously below their actual ages or, where above average ability is indicated, seriously behind their estimated levels of ability.

The causes of reading difficulty vary considerably from pupil to pupil. They arise largely from a defective emotional climate, lack of verbal stimulation in the home (both in regard to speaking and the availability of books), forcing of early stages of development (required to accept responsibilities too early in life), lack of sleep, suitable diet, suitable recreation, and cultural stimulation. Other factors include innate dullness, defective sight or hearing, poor health and large classes. From the foregoing it is clear that a careful diagnosis of the problems facing each failing child is needed. Therefore, the following procedures are suggested in arriving at differential assessments of pupils' needs.

(1) Administer to all pupils as soon as settled in first-year classes the 'Calvert', Non-Verbal Test 3 (National Foundation for Educational Research, Messrs. Newnes). At a later stage, retest, as a check, with one of the following Non-Verbal intelligence group tests :

(a) Sleight Non-Verbal Test (Harrap) consumable booklets—A very useful follow-up to the Calvert test for less able children.

(b) Morrisby Compound Series Test (National Foundation for Educational Research). Non-consumable.

(c) Raven's Progressive Matrices (1947) A.Ab, B. Non-consumable.

*It cannot be stressed too much that rigid adherence to test instructions must be maintained if results are to bear any validity.*

(2) Administer to all pupils, at the same time as the above and not more than twice yearly after that, tests of Reading attainment. Since meaningful reading involves both word recognition and comprehension, the practice of using both word recognition and comprehension tests is recommended. However, word recognition is obviously useless without a corresponding understanding of the words read. Therefore, remedial work should continue until an adequate comprehension level is achieved, the word recognition score being used for diagnostic purposes.

The following tests will prove useful :

(i) The Holborn Reading Scale (Harrap). Individual test, excellent because words are in sentence form.

(ii) Schonell Word Recognition Test (Oliver & Boyd). Individual test.

(iii) Burt Graded Word Reading Test (suitable for very backward children). Individual test.

(iv) Vernon Graded Word Reading Test (U.L.P.). Individual test.

(v) Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (Macmillan). Individual test.

(vi) Schonell Silent Reading 'A' Test (Oliver & Boyd). Group test suitable for 7 - 11+ years age range.

(vii) Schonell Silent Reading 'B' Test. As 'A' test but particularly useful for older or more able children.

(viii) Daniels & Diack Standard Reading Tests (Chatto Windus). Group and Individual Tests.

*Again rigid adherence to test instructions is imperative to validity and reliability.*

(3) From a table of test results, weighed carefully against the teachers' opinions, select children whose reading deficiency is marked.

N.B. : Reading backwardness or advancement is determined by the difference between actual age at the time of testing and the Comprehension reading age. Should a pupil score below the norms on either test then use only one score (or enter 'Below norms').

(4) For each pupil selected for special remedial help compile detailed records of his educational, social and medical history, together with details of his home background, development in early childhood and any other relevant information. This information forms a most valuable diagnostic tool for assessing the causes of educational failure.

(5) Where necessary, refer for treatment to Health and Child Guidance Clinics any pupils found to be suffering from defective sight, hearing, speech or any other physical ailments, severe, emotional, or behavioural difficulties. Refer to the appropriate department on form 3 H.P. any pupil whose educational record indicates educational sub-normality. Each of these defects has, of course, a vital bearing upon reading attainment.

**Individual Work Assignments**

Using the knowledge already gained, prepare an individual scheme of work for each failing pupil, bearing in mind the following principles—Start non-readers, or near non-readers who have consistently failed on one or more reading schemes, on a new, to them, comprehensive reading scheme using all the apparatus and work books up to about 'Book 3' level (R.A. approximately 6½ - 7 years).

Should a child resent the 'infant' approach of some basic reading series, the whole 'Griffin Readers' series and workbooks (E. J. Arnold) will be found invaluable. The principle here is to provide the child with an adequate 'sight' vocabulary little stress being laid on phonics at this stage.

Pupils then proceed to the following workbook scheme :

Active Reading Series by Miles (Ginn) and Ridout English Workbooks interspersed with phonic work using 'Chelsea Reading Apparatus Grade 5' (Philip and Tacey) and 'Sounds and Words' by Southgate & Havenhand (U.L.P.).

The principle to be applied in checking this work is to ensure that instructions have been correctly interpreted and tasks satisfactorily undertaken on a sampling basis. Pupils are then able to carry on for long periods on their own, freeing the teacher to deal with other members of the class.

The reading scheme applied may be tabulated as follows :

*Stage 1*

(a) 'Gay Way' to Blue Book and Workbooks, Card Material, etc. (Macmillan G. B.) or

(b) Whole of Griffin Series and Workbooks (Arnold).

*Stage 2*

*Active Reading Scheme and Ridout English Workbooks*

Get Ready for Bonfire Night.
Get Ready for London Express.
Read the readers to these Workbooks.
Ridout First and Second Introductory Workbooks.
Ridout First to Fourth Workbooks.
Get Ready for Derwent Adventure.
Read the Reader.
Ridout Fifth to Eighth Workbooks.
Get Ready for White Hawk.
Read the Reader.

The 'Chelsea Reading Apparatus Grade 5' and 'Sounds and Words' to be used when phonic words are met by pupils at this stage.

*Stage 3*

*Proceed to normal syllabus work in English*

Throughout the workbook stage the essential test of competency is the ability of the pupil to read aloud random words, phrases and sentences, selected

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# A Centre for Outdoor Pursuits

J. WALTON

*Mr. Walton has taught in secondary modern schools in Leicester and later became head of the history department at Great Barr comprehensive school, Birmingham. He is now headmaster of the Kingsway County secondary modern school, Nottinghamshire.*

The growth of the Outward Bound movement and the development of Field Centres exemplify the growing interest in the countryside as an educator. The Albemarle Committee, a product of the national disquiet felt about British youth, was enthusiastic about the effect of the challenge of difficult environments on young people. This article is concerned with initiation and development of a scheme which has sought to provide for a secondary modern school, and later for a community, a centre for Outdoor Pursuits.

### The Edale valley

It is important in detailing the history of this project to mention exact dates in order that other people who may be interested have some accurate idea of the time taken to bring it to completion. Late in the summer term of 1959 members of the staff of Kingsway Secondary Modern School, interested both in pursuits of the Outward Bound type and field work in history, geography and biology, felt the need for some permanent centre for their activities. A variety of open country pursuits organised on a week-end basis had been run in the past at Youth Hostels. The possession of one's own centre, however, has its own peculiar appeal. With the help of two local mountaineers a search was made in Derbyshire for an area which offered facilities for the type of work which was envisaged. In August 1959 a suitable area was found. The Edale valley in the Peak District of northern Derbyshire appeared to offer practically everything that was required. Watered by the River Noe, which rises on the Kinder Plateau, the valley is bounded on three sides by hills rising in some cases to 2,000 feet. Largely millstone grit, the area offers fine opportunities for hill walking and climbing, together with a terrain suitable for field work in all the environmental subjects. Some two miles south over the Mam Tor - Loose Hill ridge is limestone country and the Castleton valley. Pot-holing is within easy reach. Canoeing and sailing are the only activities which cannot be undertaken. Finding an area was obviously to be easier than finding a suitable and untenanted building. After two days search and numerous enquiries a derelict cow barn was discovered very near to Jacob's ladder not far from Upper Booth. This latter is a small hamlet of some five houses at the western end of the Edale valley.

We were not very ambitious at this time. Some roof to cover our heads was all that appeared necessary. The barn itself was probably 200 years old, rather dilapidated and full of rubbish. Looking back we are now amazed that it held any attraction at all. We had no money and little intention of going to any expense. After more sober reflection had replaced the excitement of the discovery doubts began to creep into our minds as to its suitability as a place for children. Dirty, cold, unsafe in parts, parents would be reluctant to permit their children to stay there. Alterations would obviously be necessary. Perhaps £50 could cover the cost of all that would be needed. It is fortunate that man is not endowed with the ability to look into the future. Many enterprises would have collapsed. This project, I feel, most certainly would never have started. To date the cost has been approaching £1,400. This sum represents more the cost of materials than labour costs, as much of the work has been done by ourselves.

Without this fore-knowledge we returned to Kirkby-in-Ashfield and set in motion further enquiries. It appeared that the barn belonged to the National Trust. The Trust was prepared to rent the building to us at a merely nominal fee provided that we put it, and kept it, in a good state of repair. To put it in order was going to be expensive. At least £200 would be required. Also a lease would be necessary.

### Overcoming the difficulties

Very carefully the position was examined, and with some presentiment of the difficulties ahead we felt that if the project was worthwhile we could raise the money. The fact that whilst this article is being written a party of eighteen boys and girls are now using the Centre, cooking on electric stoves, burning electric light and using modern toilet facilities is a fine reflection on the generosity and foresight of the Nottinghamshire Education Committee,

the King George V Jubilee Trust and the enthusiasm and labour of the many people who have given not their money but their labour. It is an interesting aside to note at this point that there are many people in a community who may not be teachers but who have a tremendous amount to offer to young people. We have been lucky in Kirkby to have been able to draw on these people in the Edale project.

Between August 1959 and March 1960 no work of consequence took place at the barn. The time was taken up in legal and administrative negotiations. The lease necessitated the creation of some kind of management committee, and immediately raised the question of the relationship of the barn to the Education Authority. Eventually it was decided to have a private committee of management on which would sit a representative of the Nottinghamshire Education Committee. This was a very correct decision, otherwise, if the lease had been vested in a local government body and the project controlled by such a body, no appeals for assistance to national charitable organisations could have been made.

A further point had arisen relating to the prospective users of the Centre. The publication of the Albemarle Report in 1960 had focused national interest on youth, and many of us concerned with the Edale Centre began to feel that it would be better to relate the Centre, when completed, to the youth of the whole locality rather than only to the boys' of Kingsway School. The urban district of Kirkby-in-Ashfield is a typical mining community of some 22,000 people, with no particular provision for youth. This Centre could be made available to the youth of the whole area, and perhaps stimulate youth development in other directions. Probably, for the first time, we began to see the real possibilities that lay in the work ahead of us.

### Barn or centre?

Looking back over the minutes of our early meetings I notice that the original intentions of making the barn merely a makeshift place for spending the night had now completely changed. Various members of the committee of management had visited centres in different parts of the country. It became obvious that if young people were to be encouraged to use the centre which we hoped to create; if we were to get the support of their parents; the barn would have to undergo a drastic modification. The walls would have to be strengthened, an upstairs floor erected, new windows made, electricity installed, water somehow piped and sanitary provisions made. Nothing could be done until a builder was employed to make eight new windows and ensure that the structure of the building was safe. A builder was found but we dared not let him start work until money was available to pay him. It seemed that the project would never get under way. The lease had, at last, been completed. In fact we were tenants of property in Derbyshire but had no money to pay the builder to make this property habitable. It was at this time, early in June 1960, that we received a cheque for £750 from the King George V Jubilee Trust. No money could have been more welcome, no time could have been more opportune. At last the real work in Edale could begin.

### Transformation

The work is still continuing. For nearly a year working parties of staff, parents, boys and other interested people have been going the forty miles to Edale. Hardly a week-end has been missed. The work has been physically very hard. Problems have at times seemed unsurmountable. The expenses have far outrun the £750 granted by the Jubilee Trust. Money has been obtained, however. An interest-free loan from the Nottinghamshire Education Committee of £300 was very gratefully received. Now, nearly two years after the discovery of the old barn in Edale, the Edale Centre for Outdoor Pursuits is nearly finished. Downstairs there is a combined common room with dining-room, a separate smaller dining-room, a kitchen and ablutions. The kitchen contains two cookers and two sinks supplied, at the moment, with only cold water. Food is served on to a counter, collected by the people using the Centre and taken into the dining-room. There are eight wash basins and three lavatories. These facilities are so arranged to enable mixed parties to use the Centre. The upstairs section is served by two staircases. There are three bedrooms, so arranged that the staircases can be used without entering the rooms. The inside of the building is lit by electricity. It has not yet received its interior decoration. This will be done shortly, using pastel colours to reflect as much light as possible.

As mentioned earlier the Centre is already being used. Every week-end this term, and sometimes during the week, parties of young people have stayed there. Bookings for the next session ending at Christmas are already being taken. The use of the Centre has provoked considerable thought. The original plan to serve the needs of a secondary modern school has, we have seen, expanded to include the youth of the urban district. It was felt that youth groups outside Kirkby-in-Ashfield, but within the county of Nottinghamshire, should also be given the opportunity of using the facilities in

Edale, provided that Kirkby was allowed a certain priority. Hiring or renting fees had to be arranged, on the one hand not to be prohibitive and on the other to bring in sufficient income to make the necessary repayments on loans, for electricity and other services. It has been decided to charge 2s. 6d. for every 12-hour period. This we anticipate, on present returns, should bring in an annual income of at least £200.

### No risks

Supervision of parties at Edale has also had to be carefully considered, and quite strict rules have been made to ensure the proper use of the premises, and also the correct use of the surrounding countryside. It is amazing how difficult some human beings can be to deal with! The Committee of Management is the responsible body to whom all complaints are addressed. We have to ensure that the young people who use the Centre know the country code and are responsibly led. They can so easily and without intention cause offence to the native inhabitants. Also a hilly country is a potentially dangerous country. Risks with life cannot be taken.

If the creation of this place in Edale had been the only thing achieved I think we would have been satisfied. As a result of it, without any doubt, new fields have been opened to the young people of the area. Judging from letters received from leaders of parties the customers have been more than satisfied. It is, however, worthy of note that this movement has not remained isolated and without influence on the activities of local youth. Directly linked to it a society — Kirkby Explorations — has been formed which aims to give young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty the opportunity of field research overseas. This year twelve local boys have been to Central Iceland for a month to undertake research work in geology, archaeology and biology. Some of these have crossed ice-caps, and all of them met very challenging situations. Their training centre was in Edale. Next year it is hoped to arrange a visit by the girls of the area to the Dolomites.

In no way connected with outdoor pursuits, but directly as a result of the growth of the Edale Centre, a local youth committee and Youth Council has been created whose main aims are to encourage and develop the work of youth clubs and societies in the township. The Youth Council will, as it develops, serve as a local parliament of youth, and is already performing very useful public services. The potentials now exist in Kirkby to provide for those who have left school many of the facilities provided by a university union for its student members.

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# Some Problems of Transition; the Transfer from Primary to Secondary Education

ERIC LINFIELD

*Eric Linfield is headmaster of Redlands County junior school, Hampshire.*

Every educational programme depends for its long-term success on a gradual development in the knowledge and understanding of each child as he or she progresses from one stage to the next. It seems essential that the children of a democratic society should be educated in democratic schools concerned with democratic principles; this might be phrased, from each child according to his educational ability, and to each child according to his educational need. This surely means that one must accept the comprehensive principle, where ease of transfer, from one group to another within a class, from one class to another within a school, or from one type of school to another, can be made. The operative word is ease, which implies a lack of disturbance for the child. Of course, modern democratic societies must have a considerable mobility of population, and more children are moving schools today in this country than ever before. This is being studied by sociologists and educationalists, and is outside the scope of this short article. My concern is the transition from primary to secondary school, whether grammar, technical, modern or comprehensive, for the majority of our children.

After stating my idealistic and hopeful goal for education in a democratic society, one has to be realistic about the present situation and one soon discovers that difficult transition points do occur, especially at the Infant-Junior and Junior-Secondary transfers. The main problems of the Infant-Junior transition arise from the effect on the child of the change from formal to informal or informal to formal class and school organisation. Since this transition happens at an early stage in the school career of each child, there is very early adaptation on the part of most children. However, at the age of eleven more important factors are involved and these I wish to consider.

For most children in their eleventh year, more than half their school days are over, even if they stay on at school until they are sixteen. Consequently, one hopes that the Junior-Secondary transition will proceed as smoothly as possible. Some of the difficulties could be resolved between the junior and secondary teachers themselves in any given geographical area, but unfortunately this liaison rarely takes place for various reasons which I cannot discuss here, but most of these problems could be dealt with by a genuine educational concern about ends and means on the part of the whole teaching profession within a given area.

Every year, at the beginning of the Autumn term, junior schools receive their first batch of child-visitors, usually after school or at half-term; these are children, who left the school at the end of the previous term and who are now making an effort to renew contact with the environment which they have just left. They tell of their new secondary school, of the vast number of different rooms which they use each day, of their new subject interests, and often of some teacher whom they single out for special praise, as now they have a range of teachers instead of one class teacher. They talk of subjects on the time-table in a new way, and it is obvious that they are challenged by this new world of specialisation and specialists. Quite often in the secondary modern school, the history master or the geography mistress will be using some form of project technique with which the child is already familiar, but this appears to be conducted in a new way. The regular and familiar environment of the junior classroom which surrounds them for the basic subjects as well as for the social studies, for art as well as drama, has given them a stability which this movement from room to room disturbs. Some schools manage to organise their first-year forms with a class-teacher, continuing, for the basic subjects at least, the familiar pattern. I think this continuity proves particularly valuable for the retarded and backward children, but it might be considered more widely for general adoption in secondary modern and grammar school first forms.

Since we are concerned to preserve the quality of education at all its many levels, I cannot leave the problem of the specialist's initial effect on the ex-junior without this quotation : 'Existing teachers are the product of their education; habits in education only perpetuate themselves through the teachers. We know how easy it is to run through the narrow gorge of specialism at school and university and go back to teach other specialists. As specialists gyrate in their closed circles, education is lost sight of.'[1]

[1] From *The Quality of Education*—introduction, by Denys Thompson and James Reeves, Muller, 1947.

Without a lengthy discussion of the appropriate place for the specialist in secondary education, I merely state that many children are overawed by this sudden change of educational tactics on the part of their teachers when they first arrive at the secondary school.

### Some factors

Many eleven-year-olds enter single-sex secondary schools, after the family atmosphere of the co-educational junior school. This is obviously a difficult transition for some children, and one ought to know more about the relative merits of both single-sex and co-educational secondary schools before making judgments; co-education seems to fit the pattern of some types of community better than others. This leads on to the next factor affecting the child on transition, the change of geographical area in which his new school is situated. In places where the secondary modern schools are as new as the primary schools, and a similar type of architecture is used, most children regard the new school at the transition age as a continuation rather than a change, as the geographical environment is so similar. This probably applies in all New Towns and in new housing estates, where new schools have been built; here, the change of immediate environment in the school surroundings is not so important, unless the child has a long way to travel within the New Town, or within the estate. In other places, there may be an entire change of environment as in the case of village schoolchildren proceeding to a secondary modern school in the nearest town or central village; many out-of-school activities have to be neglected because of the demands of the school transport buses, having to work to tight schedules. Geographical factors ought to be considered more carefully in the transition from primary to secondary school; unfortunately, economic factors often prejudice the situation.

Whether a junior school is streamed or not, more rigorous streaming will be encountered by the child on entering most secondary modern schools, and in many grammar and comprehensive schools too. For example, in an eight-class junior school with about eighty children in each year group, the range of ability in each class must be much wider than that in any first form of a four- or six-form entry secondary school. Of course, as is the case in many comprehensive schools, the differentiation is less marked if all the streams study parallel courses at varying depths.

Finally, besides the increased specialisation to which I have referred already, there is the clash of method and approach between the two types of

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# London Comprehensive Schools

LADY SIMON OF WYTHENSHAWE

The most controversial issue that has arisen in educational thought and practice since the denominational battles of the nineteenth century is that of comprehensive schools. The L.C.C., which had advocated this method of secondary school organisation before the war, started, immediately afterwards, to put it into practice, in spite of the fact that out of 1,200 schools or departments only 50 were neither destroyed nor severely damaged. Two or three secondary schools, central, technical and senior, were combined under one head. This combination gave the necessary number of pupils, and the resulting eight schools were known as interim or experimental comprehensive schools. As new buildings became possible, the separate schools were united in one.

The process is not yet finished and not all the 59 L.C.C. comprehensive schools are yet in new buildings, but the L.C.C. thought that the time had come for an interim account of the experiment to be made. So 16 of these schools were chosen for a detailed survey by the inspectorate and the result is a report of outstanding importance and interest, not only to the London teachers for whom it was designed, but for parents, L.E.A.s and the general public who are concerned to achieve the secondary education for all promise of the 1944 Act.

These 16 schools were selected as typical of various sizes and forms of organisation. All had been open for some years but none had had children whose whole secondary school life had been in one such school and were yet old enough to take A level in G.C.E. Since, unfortunately, examination results are made the test of comparison between comprehensive and selective secondary schools, a final assessment must wait for a few years more. But every other question asked by friend or foe alike or which had arisen in the course of the experimental years are raised and dealt with in an impartial manner.

'How do you deal with the problem of size?'

'How do you give a variety of choice in one school?'

'Do you have single sex or co-educational schools?'

'Do the non-academic children feel depressed by being in the same school as the academic?'

'Do children from different home backgrounds really mix?' etc.

The problem of size is dealt with differently in different schools, and any authority about to start a comprehensive school can get much information from teachers who have worked in these schools.

It is interesting to note that the 2,000-pupil school, popularly assumed to be inevitable, has not prevailed and some schools have not been so large as the original London plan proposed and yet are truly comprehensive.

The L.C.C. secondary system is not yet wholly comprehensive. The survey points out that apart from the voluntary grammar schools, there are still 21 county grammar and 41 county secondary modern schools and a number which are in a transitional stage, becoming comprehensive, but the 59 schools surveyed account for 53 per cent of the secondary school pupils.

### The 11+ dies hard

One of the main arguments in favour of comprehensive schools has been that they would do away with the 11+ examination. This has not happened yet in London for two reasons. So long as there are voluntary and selective county grammar schools in existence, parents, especially of able children, tend to choose them, though an increasing number are giving the comprehensive school of their area as first or second choice. The second reason is that the L.C.C. decided that in the interests of fairness the comprehensive schools should have, so far as possible, a balanced entry of ability. But this principle is affected by geography. Those children who live near the school and who make it their first choice are admitted regardless of their performance in the 11+ examination.

All the schools provide five-year courses, but they all give much thought to suitable courses for those children who will leave at 15 although these are in a minority in half of the schools surveyed. Many methods of dealing with these children are described, showing that it is certainly not true to say that if they are in the same school the less able child will be neglected in favour of the more able.

The survey is based on facts, not collected by the teachers in the schools, who might be accused of partiality, but by a team of inspectors working under Dr. Payling. The future historian of English education may be surprised when he discovers that this study, perhaps the most important study of secondary education made since the war, is not the product of a university department of education, nor of an Institute of education, nor even of that newly established research unit at the Ministry of Education. Perhaps now that the L.C.C. has shown the way the Ministry will follow with a similar survey of comprehensive schools outside London, i.e. in Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry, the West Riding, to mention some of the larger authorities, who would all have something to contribute to the

development of a movement which, in spite of ministerial discouragement, is steadily growing. It is growing because our society is changing, and it may not be fanciful to predict that when the grammar schools — that most conservative section of our educational institutions — have been thoroughly awakened by the 'wind of change', they will find themselves almost indistinguishable from comprehensive schools.

At present the survey of London Comprehensive Schools can only be bought from the L.C.C., price 2s. 6d. plus postage.

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## A CENTRE FOR OUTDOOR PURSUITS

(*continued from page* 69)

The Edale scheme has been developed beyond the original intentions of those who were connected with it at the beginning. It has educated those who have been engaged in its development, as well as those who have already used it. It has, without doubt, been a challenge which, I believe, has provided numerous interesting responses. It has taught many of us to regard the growing child as a person who is not necessarily best understood within the four walls of a school.

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## SOME PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION; THE TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

(*continued from page* 70)

school; this happens regularly in such subjects as mathematics and English, where a different emphasis seems to be made at the two stages. Unhappy experiences in forcing children to change their style of handwriting have also been brought to my notice. Regular exchange of ideas between secondary and primary teachers on general educational topics such as these mentioned would ease the situation. I hope that FORUM may be instrumental in encouraging more research and discussion of these problems of transition. Education can be a challenging continuous process, as I have discovered in my wide experience, instead of a series of widely differing approaches. The child of the future will benefit if we try to solve some of these difficulties.

## A SCHEME FOR THE BACKWARD READER

(*continued from page* 66)

at every stage of his progress. Keep a record of his progress and any difficulties encountered.

The decision as to which precise point in the general work plan any particular pupil should commence may easily be ascertained by asking him to read selected instructional passages, bearing in mind that a reading age of at least 6½ to 7 years will be needed before workbooks at stage two are attempted.

At the point at which workbook instructions are understood with minimal help from the teacher, the pupil may proceed at his own pace.

The scheme, whilst primarily aimed at 'reading with understanding', nevertheless broadens the verbal expression and general cultural experience of pupils through stimulation to ask questions of other pupils and their teacher. It is designed to fit into a broad scheme of work, not to supplant it. However, many backward readers, experience has shown, will wish to carry on with this work outside the normal English periods. The teacher must use his judgment here to ascertain where most benefit will accrue. The attitude of self-directed creative activity produced in pupils by the use of these workbooks will free the teacher to discuss and develop each pupil's work with him personally. During these discussions many of the inhibiting factors discovered when compiling records of a pupil's previous history may be tackled with therapeutic results.

**Conclusion**

This remedial approach has been worked out and modified by the many teachers and pupils with whom I had had the privilege of working and to whom I am indebted, particularly Mr. R. Harding a colleague in the Birmingham Remedial Teaching Service. Justification for the approach has been found in that it has been applied, successfully, by many teachers having no previous experience of teaching reading, and, in addition, pupils may work on an individual assignment basis alongside others doing more advanced work in English. Most of all, however, considerably changed attitudes to work and school in general have been brought about, not only in pupils but also in their parents when work has been taken home. Many a Dad, previously never seen, has turned up at school wanting to "do one of these 'ere cut-out books" himself so as to be able to help his Jimmy !

(Mr. Wildblood is willing to forward copies of the record forms used by his schools on receipt of 5d. in stamps and an addressed envelope. His address is 5 Frobisher Road, Coventry.—Eds.)

## Book Reviews

# Verse Anthologies for Secondary Schools

A Critical Survey by S. COOK (Senior English Master, Firth Park Grammar School, Sheffield)

Verse anthologies are now as plentiful as breakfast cereals. like breakfast cereals they have differences that are much emphasised by the seller but are hardly noticeable to the consumer. Like breakfast cereals they depend much on packaging : for verse anthologies this means a snappy title, a pretty cover, good print and big margins, and illustrations in a 'contemporary' style. What has happened, apart from the spread of modern business methods, to make most educational publishers feel they should run one or more verse anthologies covering four, five or even more years of school life ? Are they, in the orthodox manner of the affluent society, satisfying a need which they themselves wish to create ? These publishers must feel some explanation is required, for they usually state their motives in their catalogues and fairly often need a special leaflet of several pages to do themselves full justice.

The most obvious aim seems modernity. Though teachers must favour this when it means making clear that poetry is a living thing and not a museum piece, it is offensive to have mere modernity sold by the yard. That a large proportion of the poems is still in copyright or that the anthology has more contemporary poetry than its competitors seems to be regarded as sufficient proof of merit. In fact some of the poems turn out to be only the minor work of minor poets. As a result of including so much recent work, or as an end in itself, so-called 'hackneyed anthology pieces' are omitted. Obviously a poem should not be included only because previous anthologies have included it. There are some poems, however, that an adequate anthologist must inevitably choose, such irreplaceable works as 'The Pied Piper' and 'The Ancient Mariner'. 'Hackneyed anthology piece' could be only another name for a classic. The question is : 'Hackneyed to whom ?' for no matter how important a part of a child's mental furniture a poem may become there was a time when it was as undiscovered to him as America was once to Columbus. Ian Parsons, compiler of Ginn's *Poetry for Pleasure,* says he was in two minds whether to include 'Horatius', yet whenever I take a popularity poll at the end of the year from a first-year form, 'Horatius' is towards the top of the Top Ten.

It is true that, apart from classics such as 'The Ancient Mariner' and children's classics such as 'Horatius' or 'Flannan Isle', there is a variety of poems, all still good, within which the anthologist can express his aims. For example, he might consider that children have had an overdose in the past of the Romantic Revival and might prefer an intellectually taut eighteenth-century poem to something more enervating, though poetically equal, by Keats. It is true also that a certain amount of recent or contemporary poetry is essential to deal with new subject matter that bulks large in a child's life, such as Auden or Spender on trains, or Kirkup on hospitals. How many anthologists are in fact giving children a modern view of poetry and poetry with modern views ? As far as I can see, Auden and Garrett's *The Poet's Tongue* is not only still unequalled but not even—if we must have multiplication of anthologies—copied enough. It brings the reader down to nonsense verse and riddles to find poetry and takes him out to listen to songs in English and American streets; it detects poetry in prose and in translation. Significantly the poems in it that are new to anthologies are not Edwardian or Georgian padding. There are other good modern anthologies but there are some that are modern in nothing but their format. Their publishers, in the true spirit of modern advertising, try to sell their goods irrespective of their poetic quality.

W. G. Humphreys and J. P. Parry, in their preface to *On Wings of Verse,* published by Blackie, a four-book anthology of poetry for secondary schools, are explicit that they regard the tendency I have been describing as a virtue. After saying they have included only pieces with 'an immediate appeal to boys and girls of secondary school age', they continue :

'Our choice has fallen chiefly on work done in this century. We have preferred for our purpose, Hardy, Milton, Yeats and T. S. Eliot to Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Pope. We have not hesitated to select the minor products of a great poet where these seemed more suitable, nor to choose the work of an author relatively unknown'.

A case can be made for showing Chaucer, Spenser and Milton the secondary school door, even if it seems a pity that Pope has to go too, taking his portraits of Addison and others, for children, like Pope, enjoy satirising their 'friends'. Surely, however, acceptance of these preferences cannot reasonably be held to imply acceptance of the omission of the classics 'The Pied Piper', 'Horatius', 'Flannan Isle' and 'The Ancient Mariner'. The twelve pages given to Austin Dobson's 'Beau Brocade' could

have gone to one of these. It might well be possible to make a list of the half-dozen poems a child of fifteen most needs to have met and to find they are all omitted from this anthology.

Another recent anthology, David Holbrook's *Iron, Honey, Gold* published by the Cambridge University Press, has many poems that you could do nothing with in class. The two volumes would make good bedside books—were it not for several poems that would give many children nightmares. Some of these show Hardy, the starred poet of the anthology, working his narrow vein of pessimism beyond the point where it paid in poetry.

There are some pretty things in *The Rhyming River* by James Reeves (Heinemann), but I do not think it is a practical proposition for the classroom, since it also has too many poems suitable only for reading. A poem should go deep enough into life to give the children something to talk about. The illustrations tend to be luxurious packaging: some give a definite idea of the subject different from the poem's.

*Poetry for Pleasure* and A. F. Scott's *Poems for Pleasure* (Cambridge University Press) are both weak on satire and therefore, it seems to me, too personal to represent English poetry in general to children of all tastes.

Orthodoxy, of course, is not enough. J. A. Stone's anthology (Harrap) has many of the children's classics, but is unsatisfactory in the marginal minor works where the exercise of personal preference is legitimate.

Though I think several poems are introduced too soon and though it has the old refrain—'over two-fifths of the poems are copyright ones'—I think the four-volume *Sheldon Book of Verse* by P. G. Smith and J. F. Wilkins (Oxford University Press) is clearly best. It is truly representative of great English poetry and shows good taste and good principles in its general choice of poems.

## *Fifty Contributors*

*Teaching the Slow Learner,* Edited by M. F. Cleugh. Methuen (June, 1961).

1. Teaching the Slow Learner in the Special School. 338 pp. 30s.
2. Teaching the Slow Learner in the Primary School. 286 pp. 30s.
3. Teaching the Slow Learner in the Secondary School. 270 pp. 30s.

Following her successful book, *The Slow Learner,* first published in 1957, Dr. Cleugh, Senior Lecturer in charge of the Advanced Course of Study in the Education of the Educationally Sub-normal Child at the London Institute of Education, has enlisted the aid of some fifty experienced teachers of backward children, all of whom have passed through her course, to produce a work of great value to all teachers who have to cope with the slow learner. Each teacher, at the time the chapter was written, was actually teaching in the type of school to which the chapter refers and, consequently, each volume presents workable, practical suggestions based on sound theory.

A teacher of backward children has to be a specialist in children rather than a subject specialist, but the chapter headings refer to subjects because so many teachers are subject specialists and want to know how to teach, say, arithmetic or music to slow learners rather than how to teach slow learners. The editorial task of integrating these subject-chapters into an authoritative work covering the whole child has obviously been no mean task and has been carried out most skilfully.

In addition to these subject-chapters, each volume makes valuable suggestions on the keeping of records. The primary school volume covers the specific problems of the infant school, the small village school and has a special chapter on remedial teaching, while the secondary school volume contains sections on work with backward adults, children in approved schools as well as suggestions for school journeys and for the unification of the curriculum. The special school volume has some interesting things to say about the transition period to adult life, the maladjusted child and the physically handicapped child.

It is interesting to note how many of these teachers stress the importance of good team work in dealing with the slow learner. In the primary book, W. A. Hollingbery shows how people such as the milkman, the postman, etc., can help, always providing that the teacher has briefed these people in advance. Hilary Devereux, in an interesting chapter on housecraft in the secondary book, shows how the specialist teacher can co-operate with teachers of the basic subjects, while, in the special school book, R. A. Jones points out the stupidity of the teacher showing the child how to do Marion Richardson patterns while in another session the physio-therapist is aiming at 'Temple-Fay' large strokes done from the shoulder. Only too often in this field the children are confused by too many different well-meaning people working in isolation, each unaware of what the other is doing, and it is pleasing to note that so many experienced teachers are beginning to stress the value of co-operation with parents, other members of the school staff, other professional workers in the ancillary services and the lay public.

The books are durable and attractively bound and, especially in the case of the special school volume, are well illustrated by simple line drawings. Each chapter ends with a bibliography.

These three volumes should find a place in the teachers' reference library of every school. A great deal of value can be gained by comparing the chapters in each of the three volumes in order to see the difference of treatment at each level. There is no fixed boundary line between those children in special (E.S.N.) schools and those in ordinary schools and placement often depends on area geography and accommodation available. Each type of school would read with profit about the problems of others.

R. C. ABLEWHITE.

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